

critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
MU 2-0326 T. M. KRAUS

Feb 1, 1954 Vol VI No 22 \$10 year \$25 3 years The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Diary

The Immoralist-Royale (2/1/54-Official premiere which critics will cover is 2/8/54. Week of paid previews.) Billy Rose presents Ruth and Augustus Goetz adaption of Andre Gide's semi-autobiographical novel. Daniel Mann directed cast headed by Geraldine Page and Louis Jourdan. Charles Dingle and David Stewart are featured...Lullaby-Lyceum 2/3/54. Jerome Mayer and Irl Mowery present Don Appell's comedy about a 38 year old bachelor who elopes against his dotting mother's wishes. Mary Boland, Kay Medford, Jack Warden, Al Ramsen comprise the cast of 4 directed by Jerome Mayer...Stockade- President 2/4/54. Diana Green and Paul Butler present Mark Appleman's adaption of a part of James Jones' novel "From Here to Eternity." Cast includes Jay Barney, Murray Hamilton and Don Gordon. Directed by Robert Gordon.

John Murray Anderson Dies

Almanac producer John Murray Anderson died Jan 30 in his Park Ave penthouse apartment of a heart attack at age 67. The list of credits as producer covers 34 musical comedies or revues, 7 circuses, 4 aquacades, 11 pageants, 61 movie house stage shows and 24 night club revues. Highlights include Greenwich Village Follies, Jumbo, Ziegfeld Follies 1934, 1936, 1943, One for the Money,

Current Theatre Reviews

Ruth Draper One Woman Show-Vanderbilt 1/25/54. "Farewell" NY appearance of veteran performer drew raves from all but McClain, Journal American. Critic felt that as proper theatre at regular prices it leaves something to be desired. The rest of the NY daily critics disagreed. No one else has the warmth and understanding she has for the women she acts, praises Atkinson, Times. Matchless taste and matchless work not to be missed, advised Kerr, Herald Tribune. No one has ever done so much alone on a stage, adds Chapman, News. Coleman, Mirror, noted many eminent actors and actresses in her audience, absorbed in her program and in a study of her technique. Draper is an admirably accurate, keenly discerning interpreter of humanity, critic applauded. Hawkins, World Tele-gram & Sun, observes that very few people have ever talked very coherently about her, because there are no standards by which to gauge her. The magic she conveys, he believes, is as inexplicable as air, light, love. There are more living people in her one woman show, raves Watts, Post, that in most Broadway plays put together.

Out of Town Tryouts

Girl In Pink Tights, Shepard Traube's musical comedy with Jeanmaire and David Brooks, has considerable potential, rates Bone, Variety, New Haven. Book is interesting, if not outstanding, and some of tunes are pleasant. Producer must make the second act as strong as first, but critic predicts trick can be done before Broadway debut.

TV Tryout

A Dash of Bitters, a new play by Reginald Denham and Conrad Sutton Smith, will be seen on ABC TV "Motorola TV Hour" Feb 9 9 30 PM EST. Script, which has not yet been produced, has been adapted for TV by its authors. Program will feature Estelle Winwood, Joan Loring, Richard Waring.

 ' Off Broadway '

Emilie Stevens and Jason Wingreen, 2 of the founders of Circle in Square, will have parts in The Girl on the Via Flaminia, which opens Feb 9...Sean O'Casey's Shadow of a Gunman was presented by Studio 8 40, 115 W 52...Detective Story is being presented by Equity Library Theatre Feb 3-7.

Fire Exit, presented as the 10th production of the Artists Theatre at Amato Theatre, will put the Orpheus tale away for a long time, Fans Rice, Post, As the poet-author V R Lang becomes more enraptured with her phrases, sense and meaning get lost.

No Exit, presented at the Cabaret Theatre of the Open Door, 55 West 3rd St, maintains a fairly high level of interest, thanks to Ted Hoffmann's direction, okays Frank, Women's Wear.

 ' Vaudeville '

Current Palace stage show headlines Marty May and Pat Rooney, Jr. Featured are The Impressionaires, Alphonse Berge, Great Drapo, Atomies, Frank Paris and Bobby Whaling.

 ' Theatre on TV-Papa Is All '

ABC TV US Steel Hour presents Papa Is All Feb 2 at 9 30 EST with Jessie Royce Landis, Walter Slezak and Dorothy Sands.

Broadway production of Penn. Dutch folk comedy written by Los Angeles Examiner drama critic Patterson Greene ran 63 performances at the Guild Theatre. Jessie Royce Landis and Dorothy Sands were in the original Theatre Guild production which opened Jan 6, 1942. Celeste Holms was featured.

Split notices were filed by NYC daily critics. Times, Sun, Post, News critics billed it as pleasant fun. Tribune, World Telegram, Journal American and PM reviewers panned it for diverse reasons.

 ' Theatre TV Comments '

Richard III as produced on NBC TV Herald Tribune Theatre drew 3 pros and 1 con from NYC daily TV critics. Dissenter was Crosby, Herald Tribune, who feared Maurice Evans portrayal of the role 16 years after his Broadway hit in it lacked "heart." It was merely a cold exercise in technique. Gould, Times, had many complaints, but felt the stirring third act made up for the over produced earlier segments. Tuck, Post, also had minor complaints, but thought the whole superb. Van Horne, World Telegram-Sun, enjoyed the entire production.

Backbone of America, Robert E. Sherwood's first NBC TV script, lacked the stirring theme, the bold voice, the authentic Sherwood thunder, notes Shayon, Saturday Review. Critic hopes that in the other 8 plays contracted for the playwright will assert himself more forcibly in the casting and in the direction.

 ' Theatre Books Comments '

"Julia Marlowe's Story" by E H Sothorn, edited by Fairfax Downey (Rinehart) won two favorable notices from Sunday newspaper book critics. Brook, Times, listed it as an example of a fine art preservative. While Eaton, Herald Tribune, found it entertaining as both a life story of Julia Marlowe and as a revelation of the playful mind of Eddie Sothorn.

"Jean Anouilh: Poet of Pierrot and Pantaloon" by Edward Owen Marsh (British Book Centre) was rated as a more earnest than brilliant job by Valency, Saturday Review. Nevertheless, the reviewer adds, this study of a major dramatist is in many ways both sensitive and just. A certain degree of obtuseness is very pardonable in relation to an author so intricate.

WHO NEEDS CRITICS...Veteran first nighters would rather look at each other than at critics, surmises Sylvester, News. Only 6 pairs of "first night" tickets were cancelled when it was announced that Billy Rose's The Immoralist would play a week of paid previews Feb 1-7 prior to the Feb 8 performance when the critics would officially cover it...Billy Rose may try to use extensive TV and radio publicity to put over his show before the reviewers cover it, a producer told McCord, Herald Tribune.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Don't let anyone tell you The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker is tasteless or shocking, chides Watts, Post. Once play has swung into action it is bright, entertaining and remarkably engaging in its period charm...So many stagehands have been caught on stage this season, notes Watt, News, that it would be only fair for them to join Equity...Stage setting of His and Hers looks like it cost \$1, pans Nathan, Journal American.

NEED YOUNG FANS...Theatre is missing the vital opportunity of introducing theatre to the nation's young people, states Coleman, Mirror. The critic is ashamed that the theatre has not followed the promotion methods used to encourage young fans that are employed by films, sports, radio and TV. Equity's project for a 15¢ matinee for school kids was a step in the right direction.

COLUMN TIPS...Speculators are asking \$75 for a pair of tickets to Caine Mutiny... Greasepaint has no vitamins, quips Winchell, when Off Broadway actors smote for \$10-\$25 per week...3 NYC investigations are in progress on the Caine Mutiny ticket situation, hears Walker...Kim Hunter may sub for Deborah Kerr, Tea and Sympathy this summer, whispers Eaton.

GETTING HIT TIX...Read the society pages of the newspapers daily to get tickets to the hits, suggests Chapman, News. 65 benefits are being held for The Caine Mutiny, and the number increases daily. Since your money is as good as anyone else's you can mail in for the tickets at the advanced benefit prices.

ADD SHUBERT OBIT...In many ways "Mr. Lee" was the theatre. He played a controlling role in the destinies of more playhouses, productions and theatrical workers of all types, varieties and sizes than did any other man in the known world, recalls Burr, Playbill. His loyalties, though far less publicized than other faucets of his character, had protected and helped literally thousands of loyal associates in the past.

Pros & Cons by TMK

NYC critics should bow in respect to the physical courage of the Boston drama critics who last week defended their opinions of Guys & Dolls at a public performance...Actors Equity executives have again come up with a workable plan to encourage employment of their members. It is time the various producers' trade groups came forward with some workable plans....Fire Exit, presented for 3 performances by Artists Theatre, was the umpteenth modern version of the Orpheus tale. This time the actors weren't the only ones who got lost.

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Tune WNBC(NYC) Ben Grauer 7 30AM day after openings for "CD" quotes reviews.

A network of city supported "Playhouse-in-the-Park" theatres will be pushed by Actors Equity Association. Such a project in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park last summer proved both a financial and artistic success for all concerned. Representatives of the actors' union will call on mayors, park commissioners and city councils suggesting they set up like enterprises. Gerald Savory of Equity will provide information as the financing and management of municipal theatres.

Plays

The Immoralist plays a week of "paid previews" prior to critics covering Feb 8 performance...Mardi Gras folded in Philadelphia...Irving Berlin's Say It With Music, which will be the story of Music Box theatre, is scheduled to open on the 33rd anniversary of the playhouse, Sept 21...Stalag 17 road edition may play at City Center.

People

Joe Louis may be seen on Broadway next fall in The Square Ring...Uta Hagen has signed to star in Child of Grace, due in NY in April. The actress opens Feb 15 in The Lady's Not for Burning at Nassau, Bahamas...Ruth Draper has never been a member of an actor's union and is not required to join, reports Variety. But she is using an Equity stage manager for her "farewell" appearance at the Vanderbilt.

Other Broadways

Life With Mother with Billie Burke opened at Hilltop Theatre, Baltimore...Boston drama critics will discuss merits of Guys & Dolls with audience after Jan 30 matinee...London company of Fifth Season to feature Joseph Buloff and Ron Randall...Valerie Hobson, London King & I star fainted on-stage at Drury Lane Theatre. She returned to stage after a short delay...Antich College, Yellow Springs, Ohio, will continue its "Shakespeare Under the Stars" for 3 more summers.

Theatre Book Notes

The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker will be published by Random House...Feb issue of Mademoiselle includes Dylan Thomas verse play Under Milk Wood, which is being presented Feb 8 at Kaufman Auditorium. Walter Abel stars, proceeds to Thomas Memorial Fund.

Theatre Film Notes

Top Banana with original Broadway cast opens Feb 19 at Victoria...Rosalind Russell will leave Wonderful Town long enough this summer to film "The Girl Rush"...June Holliday will star in "Phfft" film by George Axelrod. Film version of My Sister Eileen with Miss Holliday have been delayed to 1955.

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